

The Oven Bird

There is a singer everyone has heard, _____
Loud, a mid-summer and a mid-wood bird, _____
Who makes the solid tree trunks sound again. _____
He says that leaves are old and that for flowers _____
Mid-summer is to spring as one to ten. _____ (5)
He says the early petal fall is past _____
Where pear and cherry bloom went down in showers _____
On sunny days a moment overcast; _____
And comes that other fall we name the fall. _____
He says the highway dust is over all. _____ (10)
The bird would cease and be as other birds _____
But* that he knows in singing not to sing. _____
The question that he frames in all but words _____
Is what to make of a diminished thing. _____

Robert Frost

*But : except
diminished : made smaller

In trying to understand this poem, it is important to see the sentences as sentences and not just stop at the end of a line.

It is also important to realize that the poem contains an important paradox (apparent contradiction). The poem was written by the same poet who wrote "Fire and Ice", so remember he does not always see things the way you might see them.

1. Write the rhyme scheme in the spaces to the right of the poem
2. Give an example of personification.
3. Give an example of alliteration.
4. It is most likely... a) March; b) May; c) August; d) October.

5. Line five suggests a) there are ten times as many flowers in summer as in spring. b) there are ten flowers in the summer and only one in spring. c) there are ten times as many flowers in spring as in summer. d) there are ten flowers in spring but only one in summer. e) none of the above.

5. The “*early* petal fall” probably took place in: a) late winter; b) late spring; c) late summer; d) autumn.

6. According to the poet, what was the weather like during the the “early petal fall.”

(Give the word or words that lead you to think this.)

7. What caused the “showers” (line seven)?

8. What word in the poem is used as a pun? (explain the pun)

9. Who says “the highway dust is over all. “

10. Try to explain the following paradox:

The bird would cease and be as other birds
But that he knows in singing not to sing.

11. What is the diminished thing? (line 14)